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The Diamond Necklace



The Greatest Drama
on the World Stage

MAR 19 1921



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IN FOUR ACTS



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By JOHN W. EASTMAN
OGDEN, UTAH

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THE DIAMOND NECKLACE.

A DRAMA IN FOUR ACTS

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By

JOHN W. EASTMAN

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CHARACTERS.

RAY STANDLEY } *husband of Dora.*
MR. MYERS }
COUNT NAPLEY, *Adventurer and a Fugitive From France.*
GERALD PRESTON, *A Wealthy Banker.*
JAMES LESTER, *A Millionaire.*
BILL STUBEN, *Coachman to J. Lester.*
ALBERT NAPIER, *Captain in the Army.*
HARRY LESTER, *Crippled Son of J. Lester.*
BURT STANDLEY, *Son of Dora and Ray Standley.*
DORA STANDLEY } *Wife of* { *Ray Standley and*
DORA LESTER } { *James Lester*
FLORENCE PRESTON, *Wife of Gerald Preston.*
MRS. VICOR, *Mother of Dora and Florence.*
AGNES LESTER, *Daughter of James Lester.*
KITTY, *Lady's Maid to Dora.*
FIRST OFFICER.
SECOND OFFICER

COSTUMES.

ACT I., SCENE I.

RAY STANDLEY: *Dark suit, soft hat, overcoat, dark hair and mustache.*

ACT II., SCENE I.

Dark trousers and vest, long frock coat, soft hat, full beard; no beard when at window.

ACT III., SCENE I.

Same as Act II., Scene I., hat on, Scene II.

ACT IV., SCENE I.

Same as Act III., hat in hand, first entrance; second entrance, hat and overcoat on, satchel in hand. Third entrance, hat and overcoat on; no satchel.

ACT III., SCENE III

JAMES LESTER: *Black suit, hair and full beard, iron-gray; no hat, diamond rings on fingers, gold watch and chain.*

SCENE V.

Same, with overcoat and hat on.

ACT IV., SCENE I.

*First Entrance, same as Act III., no hat.
Second entrance, same as Act III., no hat.
Third entrance, hat on, with riding whip in hand.
Fourth entrance, hat and overcoat on, no whip.
Fifth entrance, hat and overcoat on, no whip.*

ACT II., SCENE I.

GERALD PRESTON: *Black suit, frock coat, dark side whiskers; bright rings on fingers, gold watch and chain, no hat.*

ACT II., SCENE III.

Same, with high hat on, overcoat on arm.

ACT I., SCENE I.

COUNT NAPLEY: *Black suit, overcoat and soft hat on; black hair and eyebrows, heavy mustache and goatee.*

ACT II., SCENE III.

Same as Act I.,

ACT III., SCENE I.

Same as Act I.

SCENE V.

Bright red knitted tight-fitting suit, with cape over one shoulder, pocket in cape for revolver loaded with blank shots; red face, red mask, red shoes or slippers; black hair, mustache, goatee and eyebrows.

ACT IV., SCENE II. and IV.

Same as Act I.

ACT I., SCENE I.

BILL STUBEN: *Coachman livery dress and cap; clean face.*

ACT III., SCENE IV.

Same, with overcoat on.

SCENE V.

Same as Scene IV.

ACT IV., SCENE IV.

Same with revolver.

ACT III., SCENE III.

ROB NAPIER: *Dress as captain of military; mustache.*

SCENE IV.

With black mask.

SCENE V.

No mask.

ACT III., SCENE II.

HARRY LESTER: *Twelve to fifteen years old, dark suit, hat on; face pale, walks with crutches.*

ACT IV., SCENE I.

Same, dark suit, no hat.

SCENE IV.

With hat and overcoat on.

ACT II., SCENE I.

BURT STANDLEY: *Boy of five years dress.*

ACT IV., SCENE I.

POLICE OFFICERS: *Full beard.*

SCENE III AND IV.

Same as Scene I.

ACT I., SCENE I.

DORA STANDLEY: *Plain black dress, no jewelry.*

ACT II., SCENE II.

Dress, low neck, cream-colored satin slippers.

SCENE III.

With lace shawl.

ACT III., SCENE I.

Rich traveling dress, black shoes.

SCENE III.

Cream-colored silk dress, white shoes or slippers, diamond rings and necklace.

SCENE IV.

Same, with opera cloak, white mask, wreath of flowers on head.

SCENE V.

Same, but no flowers or mask.

ACT IV., SCENE I.

Same as Act III., Scene III.

SCENE II.

Same dress, with shawl and hat.

SCENE III. and IV.

Same, but with no shawl or hat.

SCENE V.

Hair loose and hanging down.

ACT II., SCENE I.

FLORENCE PRESTON: *Bright-colored silk dress, bright jewelry.*

SCENE II.

Same, with hat and cloak on.

ACT I. SCENE I.

MRS. VICOR: *Black silk dress, gray hair.*

ACT II., SCENE I.

Same—Black silk dress, gray hair; no shawl or bonnet.

ACT III., SCENE III.

Same dress, with gloves and bonnet on and sunshade in hand.

ACT IV., SCENE I.

Same dress, bonnet and shawl in hand.

ACT III., SCENE II.

AGNES LESTER: *Dress of pale blue silk, light-colored hair.*

ACT I., SCENE I.

KITTY GILES: *Black dress, white apron, lace cap.*

ACT II., SCENE I.

Same dress.

ACT III., SCENE III.

Bright red or yellow dress, small black apron, and lace cap.

ACT IV., SCENE I.

Black dress, white apron, lace cap.

PROPERTY.

ACT I., SCENE I.

Sofa, table, chairs, box of diamonds for Napley, letter and pocketbook for Ray; rubber dagger for Dora; shaded lamp on table, lighted.

ACT II., SCENE I.

Parlor suite, table, sideboard, box of diamonds on sideboard; pen, ink and paper on table; glass of wine for Dora.

ACT III., SCENE I.

Lawn, large flower stands; shrubbery and trees at back.

SCENE II.

Street at I. E., a pair of crutches for Harry.

SCENE III.

Parlor table, two rocking chairs, upholstered, small center table, invitation cards on center table; wreath of flowers for Dora and white mask; jewels and letter for Kitty; black domino for Napier.

SCENE V.

Landscape; empty revolver for Napier; address card; red mask and revolver loaded with blank cartridges for Napley.

ACT IV., SCENE I.

Parlor suite, chairs, table, lounge, rocking chairs, center table; small basket of keys for Agnes; hand grip for Myers; small vial for Napley; book and pocketbook of money for Dora, whip for Lester; tray, cup and saucer, plate of cake for Kitty.

SCENE III.

Handcuffs for officers, paper money for Dora.

SCENE IV.

Two revolvers for Stuben, handcuffs for officers.

The Diamond Necklace

ACT I. SCENE I.

Room in Ray Standley's house; window in flat, right corner; door in left corner; lounge under window, table and chairs in left corner; DORA and MRS. VICOR seated at table; bonnet and shawl on lounge; lamp and matches on table.

DORA: So Florence will give a grand ball, Mama?

MRS. V.: Yes, and we are going to have a grand time.

DORA: Tell me all about it, mama; pray do; I am so anxious to hear.

MRS. V.: My poor Dora. What an interest you take in such things; and here you are imprisoned in this miserable old house, in this desolate country place; you might have had a city mansion and been giving grand parties of your own. Don't it strike you that you made a big mistake when you disobeyed your mother and married Ray Standley.

DORA.: Oh, Mama, don't talk of that now. If it was wrong, it can't be helped now, and I did love Ray.

MRS. V.: Oh, to be sure you loved him; well you've got him. "All for love and the world well lost!" That sort of thing don't pay, Dora. You should have hearkened to me and married James Lester.

DORA: I wish I had, Mama.

MRS. V.: So I thought. Well, your sister told me to tell you that she especially desires you to come.

DORA: Did she, Mama?

MRS. V.: Yes; she wants you to come and that's what brought me here today. Now, the question is, have you anything suitable to wear? Mrs. Preston would never forgive you if you came looking shabby.

DORA: Not a thing. My wardrobe consists of dowdy, faded rags.

MRS. V.: Then you must have something new. Let's see--a maize silk would be very becoming, and you ought by all means, have a set of diamonds. Your jewelry is all sadly common and out of style. Can't you manage to get those things?

DORA: (*weeps*) It is very unkind of Ray, that it is, considering how much I have sacrificed for his sake; but I asked him for a new dress only yesterday and he denied me. He says his business affairs are so embarrassed that he can't afford to spend a shilling extravagantly.

MRS. V.: Pooh! They all say that. He is penurious, that's all. He can afford it well enough. In your place I'd have them, to be sure, my dear child! You don't know how to manage men. (*Dora weeps*). Too late to cry now, child. You wouldn't listen to me when I told you how it would be. Oh, no, you'd break your heart and die if you didn't marry Ray. Well, you've married him. What a fine figure you will make at your sister's ball in an old-fashioned gown and that old Roman jewelry.

DORA: I won't wear it.

MRS. V.: What will you do? If you stay at home, people will imagine the truth--that you can't appear for want of genteel clothes.

DORA: Mama, couldn't you help me, as I am afraid I shall never persuade Ray to let me have the money? But if you could lend me enough I will pay it back some day.

MRS. V.: Oh, oh! Lend you the money, you little idiot! I haven't got a hundred pounds in the world. If I had, a pretty fool I should be to deny myself to gratify you. No, indeed! Go to your darling Ray, that you couldn't live without. (*Dora covers her face and weeps*) Ah, ah, ah! What a little fool, to be sure! Mewed up in this dreary old river house and not a genteel frock to your back! And you might have been Mrs. James Lester, with five thousand a year for pin money!

DORA: Oh, Mama, please don't. You know I hated old Lester, and I loved Ray Standley.

MRS. V.: To be sure, I know it, and I wish you joy of your choice! But dare to show your face at your sister's, Mrs. Preston, unless you can come well dressed. And now, give me my bonnet and I will go. This old house with the sound of the river, (*DORA gives bonnet and shawl*) eternally in one's ears, gives me the horrors, (*MRS. V. puts bonnet and shawl on*) and it's getting so very late, it's nearly bed time.

DORA: (*savagely*) I will have the money and diamonds before this week is out if I have to——

MRS. V.: If you have to what?

DORA: Oh, nothing; come, let me take you to your carriage.

[*Exit MRS. V. and DORA, L. U. E.*]

[*Enter KITTY and WILL STUBEN, R. U. E.*]

KITTY: So, Mr. Bill Stuben, you big dunce! You say you will go and enlist in the Militia? Where is all your boasted affection for me?

WILL: Well, Kitty, don't you hope I shall fight for our country?

KITTY: Fight, you great guslin; there's very little danger of you fighting. Why can't you stay at home and let a man go?

WILL: Say! Say, Stop that! Do you think I am a woman because I wear the pants. Not on your life, Kitty; not on your life.

KITTY: Well, all I can say is, if our English soldiers are to be made up of such gawks as you, the enemy won't find much trouble in making them scamper.

WILL: Now, see here, Kitty Giles! That kind of talk goes against the grain. If I thought you meant it I'd say good-bye. Of course, you don't want to marry a coward, so consider our little hitching up arrangement null and void, scratched out, and set yourself about to find another feller to dote on, darned quick; but it's my humble opinion that you'd be several long days in finding one that could fill the place of Mr. William Stuben, Esq., head coachman to Mr. James Lester, millionaire, and M. P. (*aside*) Gee whizz! That knocks her dumb!

KITTY: (*excited, to Will*) Hush! Hush! I can hear Mrs. Standley coming.

WILL: What am I to do?

KITTY: Get behind that sofa, (*WILL gets behind sofa, lies down*) and stay there until she goes to her room. I'll go down to the kitchen. [*Exit R. U. E.*]

[*Enter DORA, L. U. E., comes center stage.*]

DORA: Mama is right. I should have married Mr. Lester. I am unfit to be a poor man's wife. I hate this lonesome old house. I want to be back in the City, to have fine robes, and jewels, to dance and flirt and go to the opera. I can't endure this life. I did love Ray, but now I fancy I am growing tired even of him. (*Angrily*). But I will have a new silk dress and a set of jewels. I will! Mama and Florence shan't think that Ray is too poor to let me have them. I won't go to Flora's ball looking like a fright, and she all dressed in her lace and diamonds. [*Enter RAY, L. U. E. DORA runs to meet him, throws her arms around his neck and kisses him*] I was this minute thinking about you, my dear. I was cross to you this morning and I have been so sorry all day; (*kisses him*) but you will let me have the new silk dress, Ray. Mama has been here, and Florence is going to give a grand ball and it will break my heart if I don't have something nice to wear.

RAY: (*speaking mournfully*) Oh, Dora, I hoped you would not ask me again, dear. I gave you the last money I could spare to pay for your black silk and the new pony carriage. I wish I had it, indeed I do, my dear!

DORA: I know you do, and you'll get it somehow, I am sure you will. (*kisses him*) I must have a nice dress and a set of diamonds, Ray.

RAY: Great heavens, Dora! How can I get them for you? I have told you I have no money. (*DORA throws him from her and speaks angrily.*)

DORA: You might get it, borrow it, only you don't care. You are mean and miserly and you want to keep me shut up in this old house till my heart breaks. I wish I had never seen you. I wish to my heart I had married old Lester. I do!

RAY: Oh! Dora! I had not dreamed that you were so heartless! I wish I could gratify you. I do, indeed. I am not miserly. It is utterly out of my power. Listen to me, Dora. Come nearer and hear what I never meant to tell you. (*Dora goes up to him*).

DORA: Well, what is it?

RAY: We have been living beyond our means for the last two years, and you wanted the ponies and carriage so, and I hated to deny you, and—and—Dora, I used money that didn't belong to me. I didn't intend to steal, heaven knows I mean to replace it, and I have succeeded in part, but don't you see, dear, that I can't spare a shilling. I must put it all back before Mr. Willis returns from abroad, or I shall be found out and ruined and disgraced for life.

DORA: (*Laughing scornfully*) Ha! ha! ha! So you have embezzled, have you? Well, some five or six hundred pounds more or less won't make your crime one whit worse, and I must have a set of diamonds, do you hear?

RAY: Why, great heavens! I can't raise what I've already taken. Would you have me take more? Would you have me sell my honor for your miserable trinkets.

DORA: You have no honor to sell, or you would never have duped me into marrying you.

RAY: You knew I was a poor man, Dora, and I thought you loved me.

DORA: Love you? Did you ever know love to exist without money. Fiddlesticks. I wish from the bottom of my heart I was James Lester's wife this very night.

RAY: Heaven knows I wish so, too!

[*Exit RAY, L. U. E., slowly, head drooping.*]

DORA: I loved him so, and sacrificed all my prospects for his sake, and this is my reward. Since he has used some of the firm's money where would have been the harm of using a little more? I'll never forgive him. Only to think how Mama and

Florence will laugh at me. Oh, dear! I wish I was dead. [*Exit R. U. E.*]

WILL: (*peeps from behind sofa*) Oh, pity the sorrows of a poor, married man; that is, if he is born of woman. His days are many and full of—well—some gets full of whiskey so they may be able to stand the ordeal when they get home. (*Gets from behind sofa to center of stage.*) And the women! I have heard of some that would make the darndest touse and almost cry their eyeballs out, because their husbands wouldn't buy them a new bonnet or some other fixing that they could just as well as not do without, and nine cases out of ten they carry the day. Well, it's a good thing they haven't Billy Stuben to deal with. Well, I better get out of here before Mrs. Standley sees me as she may report me to Mr. Lester and then there will be the devil to pay. [*Exit L. 2. E.*]

[*Enter KITTY, R. 2 E. knocking heard, L. U. E.*]

KITTY: I thought I heard someone knocking. I wonder who can it be, and so late in the evening. I better see. [*Exit L. U. E., knocking heard, L. U. E.*]

[*Enter KITTY and NAPLEY, L. U. E.*]

KITTY: Master won't be home tonight.

NAPLEY: I am very sorry to hear it, Miss, as I have lost my way and night has overtaken me. I should like to know if I could remain until morning.

KITTY: I'll speak to my mistress. [*Exit R. U. E.*]

NAPLEY: How came I to lose my road is more than I can say. If it had not been for the light I saw in one of those windows I should have had to remain out in the cold all night. (*looks off R. U. E.*) Ah! Here comes the lady herself. [*Enter DORA from R. U. E. Count NAPLEY bows to her, hat off.*]

DORA: My maid tells me you have lost your road.

NAPLEY: (*Bows*) Yes, my lady. I left Tenbury this evening at 5 o'clock to walk to Leminster, and thinking of saving a couple of miles by coming across country instead of going around the high

road, I turned off to the left, thereby losing my way. And since, I have been wandering from one road to another until I saw the lights of this house. Then I made bold to ask for shelter for the night.

DORA: You are a stranger around this part of the country, I presume?

NAPLEY: Yes, my lady. I wanted to reach Leminster tonight, as I have something very valuable I wanted to sell. They are diamonds, madam, real diamonds. (DORA *smiles*) Oh, you need not smile. I don't mean brass set with bits of red and white glass, but real diamonds of the first water, that once belonged to a crown princess.

DORA: How came you by them?

NAPLEY: I'll tell you, my lady. Before I left France, my grandmother died. She was a very grand old lady, madam, and lived in an old chateau, but when she died, her money was all gone—nothing left but those diamonds that in her will she left to me. Now I want to sell them to some beautiful lady, like yourself. (*Napley takes box of diamond necklace from his pocket*)

DORA: A very plausible story (NAPLEY *shows diamonds*.) Why they are real diamonds!

NAPLEY: To be sure! Didn't I tell you, my lady? Now would you like to buy them, cheap?

DORA: What do you call cheap?

NAPLEY: Five hundred pounds. Not one-half their value.

DORA: Oh, dear me! I could never pay that much.

NAPLEY: That's a small sum to pay for a set of diamonds, madam. You'll never have such a chance again!

DORA: Oh, how glorious they are! I would look beautiful with them!

NAPLEY: Beautiful as a queen. I never saw a woman until now, worthy to wear them. Wait until your husband sees you wear them and he'll buy them for you without a word.

DORA: I am afraid not, but I'll risk my life to possess them if you are willing to wait until morning, as I don't expect him home tonight.

NAPLEY: Gladly, madam, if you will allow me to sleep here on this sofa (*pointing to sofa*).

DORA: You can have a bed and you can have your jewels locked up for you, where they will be safe.

NAPLEY: No need to put yourself out of the way in the least. I will keep my jewels. They will be safe enough. If I lay on the floor, I could rest tonight, as I am so tired, and I am a very heavy sleeper.

DORA: If you go down to the dining room you can get some supper. The servants have not retired yet.

NAPLEY: Thank you, madam. [NAPLEY bows. *Exit R. U. E., takes diamonds with him. DORA looks after him*].

DORA: Oh, if they were mine! If I could only have them to wear at Florence's ball! (*pause*). If they were mine, wouldn't it make Florence and Mama open their eyes! But Ray won't hear of it. I am sure he won't. How provoking, that he won't come home tonight! But that man must not carry those diamonds out of this house (*savagely*) they must be mine this very night, even if I have to steep my hands in blood. I could do it, I am sure I could. He is a small man and I am strong and his body once down in the river, who will ever know. He will do just as well dead as alive. I'll do it. [*Exit door in flat*]

[*Enter RAY, L. U. E. slowly; soft music.*]

RAY: Home! Home! Oh, how sweet the name sounds! And I must leave it in a few hours, perhaps never to return, never to look upon my loving home again. I must forever be an outcast from society. I have robbed the company's safe tonight of one thousand pounds to gratify the wishes of her, whom I love. My faith in her innocence and love is so great that I could almost sell my soul to please her, and I know my Dora loves me in return. Yes, thank heaven, I have never doubted her! (*Looks at door in flat with outstretched hands*) Oh! Dora! Dora! If you

only knew how I loved you; if you only knew that for your sake I have sold my honor and have become a common thief and am disgraced for life! (*Pauses and weeps.*) It breaks my heart to leave her without one loving smile, but I will not disturb my sweet angel tonight; no, she shall not know I am here. I will leave her this one thousand pounds and a letter, (*puts letter and pocketbook on table*) and when she comes down in the morning, she will find it. Now for two or three hours of sleep, and then I'll bid good-bye to England and home. (*Takes overcoat off, puts hat on sofa at foot, lies down on sofa, face outward, covers head and shoulders with overcoat.*)

[*Enter KITTY with lighted candle, she lights lamp on table; stage lights dim.*]

KITTY: Goodness, gracious! I didn't know it was so late! Nearly 2 o'clock and everyone in bed. I got so interested in reading that book that Will gave me, I did not think of the time. I must hurry to bed. If Mrs. Standley knew I stayed up so late, there would be no end to her scolding.

[*Exit KITTY with candle, door in flat*]

[*Enter NAPLEY from R. U. E.*]

NAPLEY: Well, well, they have gone to bed and left me by myself. I wish that husband of her's was home. He might buy the jewels for her. She seems delighted at the sight of them. I don't suppose she ever possessed such valuable jewels in her life. Anyhow, I have had a good supper and can afford to wait until madam's husband comes home. (*Turns up to sofa*) What is this? My bed for the night occupied? Can this be her husband? He seems to sleep like a rock. I won't disturb him; there's a lounge in the dining room that will suit me good enough. [*Exit R. U. E.*]

[*Dim light, DORA opens door in flat, looks in*]

DORA: All is still. Every one is having the first sleep of the night from which it is hard to awaken. [*Enter DORA from door in flat with her hair loose and, dagger in hand, stands left of door*]

DORA: Now is my time. He said he was a heavy sleeper. All the better, as he won't suffer much. I will do it, and the diamonds shall be mine. I could tell Florence that Ray bought them and

make Ray think them a present from mama, no one will be the wiser, for the river (*pointing to door*) will cover my crime, and he'll do as well dead as alive. Only one blow, and the diamonds are mine. (*Soft music; DORA goes slowly to head of lounge and listens; raises dagger and stabs RAY in the back. RAY groans, rolls off the lounge to stage, face down. DORA, excited, runs down stage, drops dagger*). The deed is done! I must now throw his body over the cliffs into the river, and then no one will know that anything has happened. (*DORA picks up body and drags it off stage through door or L. U. E. Enter NAPLEY, picks up dagger quickly. Exit R. U. E., Re-enter DORA, slowly, stands by table*) Oh! I wish I had not done it! It is so horrible. I felt strong before I struck the blow, but now I am trembling and am as weak as a child! Oh! if I could call that man back to life, I would do it willingly. (*Trembling, picks up letter off table*). Ah! Here is a letter in my husband's hand-writing. He has been here—I wonder did he see me kill the peddler? (*Trembling, opens letter, reads aloud*) "My dearest Wife: I love you more than anything on earth, more than my own life, though you may not think so. I would die to make you happy. I ought not to have married you; you are too beautiful to be poor, but no one in this world will love you as fondly as I have. Dora, you shall have your jewels and your new dress. I won't disappoint you, dear. I have given you the strongest proof of my love. For your sake I have become a common thief. I will not disturb you, but will sleep upon the sofa until morning. Get the trifles you desire. Go to your sister's ball and be happy. When I am gone tomorrow, say that business called me away. If I never return, forgive me, Darling, and sometimes remember me. For your sake I have done that which makes my life worthless. If we never meet again, God bless you. The money you will find on the table. I will leave home tomorrow at 5 o'clock." (*crushes letter.*) At 5 o'clock! And it is only 2! (*goes to sofa takes up coat and hat*) My husband's coat and hat! (*staggers back*) Oh! My God! I have killed Ray, my husband! (*Falls fainting, center of stage*).

[*Enter NAPLEY, shows diamond necklace*]

NAPLEY: And lost the diamonds! Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!

The Diamond Necklace

ACT II., SCENE I.

[*Five years between first and second Act.*]

[*A room in GERALD PRESTON'S house. Window in flat; sofa, R. chairs L. and R. table C. DORA seated R., fixing five-year-old son, Burtie's tie and collar. Enter Florence L. U. E.*]

FLORENCE: My dear Dora! Are you never coming down? Heavens above! You haven't dressed yet, and here the guests and your bridesmaids will be coming soon. Will you send that child out of the room and make your toilet!

DORA: (*Laughing, to Burtie*) Send you away, my pet? How can Mama? (*kisses him*) Your Aunt Florence never had a baby of her own. That's what makes her so cross.

FLORENCE: That's true! Depend upon it, you are quite burden enough on the hands of your friends. There was no need of a brat. Moreover, the encumbrance will assuredly injure your prospects. Men do not care to have children thrust upon them, and with children of his own. It's a wonder to me that James Lester marries you.

DORA: Mr. Lester can just please himself. You talk like an idiot, Florence. The brat, as you very elegantly term my child, (*rising in anger*) was not a matter of choice, but a necessity.

FLORENCE: By no means! Mama's suggestion would have done away with all the trouble. She entreated you and so did I, to go into seclusion for a year after your husband's death. There was no need for the world ever to know of the child's existence, and I promised you he should be well cared for; but, as usual, you must have your own way and you'll go on having it to the end of the chapter, I suppose, to your own ruin and the disgrace of your friends.

DORA: I am glad I had my own way! I wouldn't be without my baby boy for the world, and don't fret over my prospects,

Florence! You and mama, I shall outshine you both yet, (*aside*) and by my devotion to Ray Standley's son, I shall, in a measure, atone for my awful crime. [*Exit DORA and BURTIE, R. 2 E.*]

[*Enter MRS. V., from L. 1 E., puts case of jewels on sideboard.*]

MRS. V.: What's the matter, Florence? Have you girls been quarreling again?

FLORENCE: I declare it is insufferable the way Dora goes on, and I won't put up with it. One would think, being utterly dependent on us for the bread she eats and the clothes she wears, she would be civil and grateful. On the contrary, no grand duchess ever carried herself more loftily, and Preston upholds her, too, flattering her about her beauty; but I can't see where she looks any better than the common run of women.

MRS. V.: Oh, my dear, she is a beauty, there is no manner of doubt about that; the sort of beauty, too, that men most admire. She takes after me, you see. She is precisely what I was at her age! (*Sits in chair*) And, don't you know, dear, this is her wedding night? We must submit to her a little.

FLORENCE: Yes, in a few hours she'll leave my house. [*Exit L. 1 E.*]

MRS. V.: (*Looking after her*) Poor, dear Florence! How hard it goes with her to be so plain! That's the secret of all her bitter feelings. She envies her sister's beauty. Not much wonder! Poor Florence! She takes after her father, poor thing. He was a horrid man to look at, but his money made up for it. [*Enter DORA from R. U. E., dressed in white silk, goes to window, opens it, looks out*] Dear me! How comfortable we might have been if that fearful panic had not ruined us. However, I have managed to get on quite nicely, owing to Florence's good marriage. [*RAY STANDLEY appears at window, white face, no hat; lime light at back; lights dim at front. DORA raises her hands to her neck, moves backward, slowly to left*] And if my hopes of Dora are realized, all will be well.

DORA: (*Screams*) Oh! heavens! The dead has arisen to accuse me! (*falls fainting, RAY disappears.*)

MRS. V.: (*Runs to DORA, lifts her head up*) Why, what does this mean? How did it happen? [*Enter KITTY, R. U. E.*]

KITTY: (*Excitedly*) Oh, madam, is my lady dead? Shall I ring for assistance?

MRS. V.: (*To KITTY*) You idiot! Would you alarm the house for nothing? Dora, my dear, are you ill?

DORA: (*Slowly*) I say I saw his face! Oh, Mama, I saw Ray's face!

MRS. V.: (*Angrily*) His face! Get up this instant! Come here, Kitty, and assist your mistress. [*MRS. V. and KITTY lift DORA up and seat her in chair at L.*] Only look at your dress; what a fright it is. We should have gone down half an hour ago. Florence was right when she predicted that you'd ruin everything by your lack of common sense! (*To KITTY*) Kitty! Stop staring like a fool and hand me those diamonds. [*KITTY gets diamond necklace from box on sideboard, brings it to MRS. V.*]

DORA: Oh! Mama! His face will come again. Ray's murdered face! Take the diamonds away, Kitty!

MRS. V.: (*Angrily*) Dora! Are you a fool? Do you wish to disgrace yourself and me, and be turned out of your sister's house? What do you mean?

DORA: Mama! I saw his face at the window!

MRS. V.: You saw no face. You only imagined it. Come, let Kitty put on your diamonds, and we will go down. [*KITTY moves to put on diamonds. DORA recoils back from chair. Aloud, with hands warding KITTY off.*]

DORA: Take them away! Oh, take them out of my sight! I'll never wear them again. There's blood upon them. Ray's blood! Take them away, Kitty, or his face will come again!

MRS. V.: (*To KITTY*) Kitty, bring a glass of brandy, and put the diamonds away. [*Exit KITTY, L. U. E., with diamonds.*]

MRS. V.: Dora, if you keep on like this, I'll never forgive you. You saw nothing but one of the servants. Why, one would think you murdered Ray Standley the way you go on!

DORA: What! What! Who says I murdered Ray? It is false! I didn't murder him! He was drowned. Didn't they pull his

body out of the river? Who says I murdered him? [DORA *sits in chair*]

MRS. V.: I believe, on my soul, you have gone mad. Why everyone will say it and believe it, too, if you go on in this way. What is the matter with you?

DORA: Nothing, nothing. [*Enter KITTY, L. U. E. gives drink to DORA.*]

KITTY: Drink this, my lady, and you will feel ever so much better. [DORA *takes drink, gives glass to KITTY. Exit KITTY, L. U. E.*]

DORA: I am quite myself now. I am weak and nervous; that's all. I am all right now.

MRS. V.: Now, my dear, you must forget that such a person as Ray Standley ever lived. Only do as I tell you, then all will be well. You disobeyed me once and married a poor man. Now, will you go down to the drawing room and win this rich husband, or will you make a fool of yourself and be turned out of your sister's house? For Florence will surely turn us out unless you do her credit tonight.

DORA: I don't think I shall make a fool of myself or disgrace Mrs. Preston.

[*Enter KITTY with letter and box of jewels; gives them to DORA*]

KITTY: A letter and a case of jewels for Mrs. Standley. [*Exit L. 2 E.*]

MRS. V.: My dear Dora, I know it is good news; is it from Mr. Lester.

DORA: No, Mama, (*reads letter*) it's a note from Count Napley. He wants to see me, if only for one minute, in the laurel walk, and to wear those jewels and he warns me not to disappoint him. (*Aside, reads*) "Remember the old river house," what does he mean? (*Aloud*) Not disappoint him? Well, now, I call that impudence!

MRS. V.: He is French, my dear, and Frenchmen are always peculiar.

DORA: Then I don't like Frenchmen. I shall send his jewels back. He also sends me an offer of marriage.

MRS. V.: How would you like to become Lady Napley?

DORA: Lady Napley sounds very fine, but Lester must be my husband. It is bad enough to be forced to take him with his grizzly face, but I shan't be afraid of him, and he is so rich. Only think what it will be to have five thousand [*Enter FLORENCE* L. 2 E.] per annum for pin money! (*To FLORENCE*) Ah, Florence! you have queened it over me for some time, but when I am Mr. Lester's wife, my turn will come. (*DORA rises from chair*).

FLORENCE: When you are his wife—but you are not yet. Don't count your chickens before they are hatched.

DORA: If it were my misfortune to be as plain as you are, my poor Florence, I should not dare to do such a thing, but being, according to your husband's judgment, the handsomest woman in the country, I may safely count on every egg. (*FLORENCE gives DORA a sounding smack on the face with her open hand.*) How dare you strike me!

FLORENCE: How dare you insult me with your impudent speeches; under my own roof, too?

MRS. V.: (*Going between them*) My dears! My dears! I am astonished! I didn't thing you capable of such ill-bred conduct! Dora, if you have decided not to wear those jewels, send them back and be done with it.

DORA: I will send them back, and I'll find out what he has to tell me. And my dear (*sneering*) Florence, my dear, plain Florence, in a few hours I shall be Mr. Lester's wife and then I shall triumph over you. Good-bye, Mama; good-bye, my plain Florence. The next blow will be mine. [*Winks up stage. Enter from L. U. E. PRESTON, and MYERS who has on full beard and wig.*]

PRESTON: My dear, Dora, were you going out?

DORA: Yes. I have a little business to attend to.

PRESTON: Speaking of business matters, Dora, I have a chance to sell the old river house; I mean where you used to live.

DORA: I am glad of that. Pray do so, without delay.

PRESTON: This is the buyer, Mr. Myers, Mrs. Standley. (*Both shake hands*) He once saved me from drowning, while in America four years ago.

FLORENCE: Come, Mama. We will leave the gentlemen to do their business. [*DORA, MYERS and PRESTON go to the table; FLORENCE and MRS. V. Exit, L. 2 E.*]

PRESTON: Mrs. Standley has not changed her mind after the manner of ladies. She is still willing to sell the place, so we will fix the preliminaries at once.

MYERS: Very well, sir. (*DORA staggers at sound of MYERS' voice*).

PRESTON: Why, Dora! How nervous you are! What's the matter?

DORA: Nothing, only I am tired, and as soon as you are through with me, I will go.

PRESTON: You can go now, Dora; I will arrange everything with Mr. Myers. (*PRESTON and MYERS at table with papers.*)

DORA: I can't think what has come over me! The least thing agitates me so and I am always meeting such strange people. There's Count Napley—the very sight of him gives me a nervous chill. And this man Myers—the sound of his voice went right to my heart. He reminds me of Ray. Oh, heavens! (*Pressing her hand to her heart*). If I could forget that miserable past! But something is constantly bringing it back. If I could only forget Ray, but I can't! Oh, God! I can't! [*Exit L 1 E.*]

PRESTON: (*Gives papers to MYERS*) There, that is done with, and I can say you have a cheap piece of property. Five thousand—just about half its value; and being so close to us, you must come and visit often. Come and I'll show you what a grand scene it presents from the outside of our house. [*PRESTON and MYERS put hats on. Exit L. 2 E.*]

SCENE II.

[*Landscape at first E. Enter PRESTON and MYERS from L. 1 E. talking and pointing to R. 1 E.*]

PRESTON: There; you can see from here what a magnificent place you have bought. Of course, it is rather a quiet place in which to live. No one to disturb your peace of mind—and there are some very fine ships go up and down that river into the Bristol channel. Mrs. Standley lived there quite awhile before she lost her husband, about five years ago. Since then she has been living with us. She and her little son, Burtie; and, by the way, this is her wedding night.

MYERS: (*Nervously*) Her wedding night?

PRESTON: Yes. She will be will be married to Mr. James Lester.

MYERS: Does she love him, do you think?

PRESTON: Not as she loved her first husband, but Lester is rich, and Dora loves riches, you know. She could never be happy as a poor man's wife. They go to Paris immediately after the ceremony. I trust you will be with us as one of our guests?

MYERS: Thank you. I will ride over to the river house and see what repairs are needed, if any. I will be back here on time, and I wish you could get me an interview with Mrs. Standley before she leaves for Paris.

PRESTON: Why, certainly, you can. She will be able to spare a few minutes, I am sure.

MYERS: Thank you. Now I'll hurry so that I can be here on time. So good-bye, Mr. Preston. [*Shakes hands. Exit R. 1 E.*]

PRESTON: Good-bye, Mr. Myers, until this evening. (*Turns to L.*) Ah! Here comes Mrs. Preston. [*Enter MRS. PRESTON, L. 1 E.*] Well, my dear! I have just parted with our new neighbor.

FLORENCE: Myers? Is that the name?

PRESTON: Yes, my dear. He is a new-comer, and rather an odd sort of genius. He is a man that has seen great trouble.

FLORENCE: Has he a family?

PRESTON: No. He is all alone; lost his wife and all his relations. They are all dead. He is going to live by himself; a sort of scientific hermit. This is the man you have heard me speak of so often, who saved me from drowning while in America, four years ago.

FLORENCE: You take great interest in this stranger. He may prove to be an escaped convict or something worse, and make you wish you had never seen him. Never be too familiar with strangers. Yet you are like my sister, Dora. If she don't bring us to shame by her wild ways, it will be a wonder to me.

PRESTON: And a disappointment, too, one would infer. Gracious heavens! What creatures you dainty women are! What venomous claws you sheath under your pretty, velvet fur! Nothing pleases you so intensely as another woman's downfall, even when that woman is your own sister.

FLORENCE: There you go again, always taking her part! I won't hear another word!

PRESTON: All right, my love! Your wish is law. [*Exit R. 1 E.*]

SCENE III.

[*Landscape at back. A garden scene, shrubbery and flower stands at sides; wood scene at back. Enter NAPLEY, R. U. E., reading letter*]

NAPLEY: (*Reading*) "I do not want your jewels, Count Napley, and I feel insulted that you should forget yourself so far as to make me an offer of marriage, and that, too, on my wedding night. But, to please my mother, Mrs. Vicor, I will see you in the laurel walk at 5 o'clock, but I will listen to no nonsense, so whatever you have to tell me must be very brief." (*Crushes letter, looks off L. U. E.*) Little you know the kind of a man you've got to deal with! I will make you crawl under my wing yet! Ha! ha! ha! Here she comes! What a glorious creature she is! Dangerous as a panther and beautiful as an angel. It is something to have such a woman so utterly under one's control. What I command, she will do. I have sworn it, (*comes down stage*) and I'll keep my oath! (*Enter DORA, L. U. E. To DORA*) So, my Circe, you have come!

DORA: Is it a custom in France, Count Napley, for a gentleman to address a lady as he would a dog?

NAPLEY: We won't discuss the customs of France, just now, Mrs. Standley. You would not wear my jewels?

DORA: No. I could not.

NAPLEY: They were very beautiful, and very valuable, and I fancied you were fond of jewels.

DORA: (*Aside*) Who is this man? Why does his presence terrify me? (*Aloud*) It is damp out here and my shoes are thin. I cannot remain. I must go indoors.

NAPLEY: (*Grasps DORA by the wrists.*) In such a hurry to leave me? What's the matter, Mrs. Standley; you are not afraid of me?

DORA: No; but you have no right to keep me here. I shall go indoors.

NAPLEY: Tell me first why you would not wear my jewels.

DORA: I have told you. Because I did not choose to wear them; and because I do not love you. I cannot be your wife. (*DORA struggles from his grip.*)

NAPLEY: Ha! ha! ha! Is it necessary, then, that you love the man you marry, Mrs. Standley. I beg your pardon, but did you love your first husband?

DORA: You villain! What is it to you whether I loved him or not? You have no right to question me.

NAPLEY: Pardon, madam, but I have. All things are fair in love, and I love you to distraction. I have loved you for years.

DORA: (*Laughs scornfully*) Years, Count Napley? Our acquaintance scarcely dates over a month ago.

NAPLEY: Are you sure of what you say, madam? Look at me well. (*Moves towards L. U. E.*).

DORA: (*Aside*) Is this a madman, or am I losing my senses? What is there about this man's eyes that thrills me with such a strange sensation? (*Aloud*) I met you at my sister's recep-

tion for the first time, Count Napley. Don't make me regret that I ever met you at all. Stand out of my way, please!

NAPLEY: Whether you regret it or not, my dear Mrs. Standley, it is all the same. I love you. I have loved you for nearly five years, and one of these days I shall make you my wife. I could not bear to lose you.

DORA: You'll have to bear it, then. Do you see this ring upon my finger? (*Shows ring*). Mr. Lester put it there not a month ago; and in an hour or so, he will be my husband.

NAPLEY: Happy Mr. Lester. In an hour or so? Well, on the whole, I don't object to the arrangement. In a month you will be his wealthy widow and then my turn will come.

DORA: What do you mean? Are you a madman, or an idiot? Let me go indoors this instant.

NAPLEY: (*Clutches her arm and pulls her to middle of stage*) No matter what I mean at present! My dear, marry Mr. Lester as soon as you please. We will make our arrangements later. (*DORA struggles and pants*).

DORA: Let me go! You shall suffer for this! You shall answer for this insult. Let me go! I won't listen to your nonsense one minute longer! You are a lunatic. I will not hear you!

NAPLEY: (*Shaking her*) You'll hear me quite as long as I see fit to keep you here, Mrs. Standley. Don't you know that every living thing has its master, and I am yours, my beautiful Circe! Ha! ha! ha! Your master! (*savagely*) Do you hear! and you are as sure to do my bidding to the letter as you are to breathe. (*DORA struggles a moment*) There, there, softly, now, you must hear me out. I am neither a fool nor a madman, as you think. Who and what I am, you will find out in good time, my beautiful Cassandra. You who bewitch men with your wondrous beauty and make them mad for your love! Shall I tell you what you are? Come closer. (*Pulls her towards him*) You are a murderess! (*Flings her off him*) Ha! ha! ha!

DORA: (*Staggers back, uplifted hands*) Oh, my God! My sins have found me out! (*Falls, fainting in middle of stage*).

NAPLEY: (*Pointing finger at DORA*) Mine! Mine! Body and soul! Ha! ha! ha

The Diamond Necklace

ACT III., SCENE I.

[*Lawn, landscape at back, small table and chairs; DORA and MYERS seated.*]

DORA: So you think you have a bargain in buying the old river house, do you?

MYERS: Yes. I seem to love the place already. It is so quiet and comfortable that I don't see why you should be so eager to give up the place. I should think you would keep it if it was only in remembrance of your first husband? Were you not happy there?

DORA: I have seen happy moments there, but now I detest the place. I have never been near the place since my Ray died.

MYERS: Who is Ray?

DORA: He was my husband; my husband who is dead. I am afraid to even look at the house when I drive past.

MYERS: I don't see why you need be afraid to visit there sometimes. I made a little change there since I bought it. The upstairs I don't use at all for my sleeping room. I use the very room, they tell me, where your husband's body lay.

DORA: (*Rising, with hands to her head*) For heaven's sake, Mr. Myers, do not mention that room again! The very thought of it fills my soul with horror. I do not want to hear the name of the old river house while I live; it makes me afraid I shall see his face again!

MYERS: (*Rising*) Dear me, Mrs. Lester! The dead never rise again! You surely don't believe in ghosts? You don't pretend to tell me the house is haunted, do you?

DORA: Oh! Mr. Myers! I saw his face twice the same day—his murdered face!

MYERS: What is that? His murdered face! Was he murdered?

DORA: Don't ask me questions! Don't talk to me! (*Covers her face with her hands*). I am the most wretched woman on the wide earth! I wish I was dead.

MYERS: No, you don't Mrs. Lester. You are fond of life. You wouldn't care to die tonight if the chance was offered you?

DORA: What do you mean? No, I wouldn't care to die tonight.

MYERS: I thought so. You are only nervous, Mrs. Lester. You will get over that feeling when you get on the continent with your new husband. You were nervous and may have been thinking so much about your dead husband that you fancied you saw him.

DORA: No! No! I saw him twice! And he called my name!

MYERS: (*Laughing*) I should fancy it would be pleasant to have our dead friends return if such things were possible. The great trouble is, they leave us and come back no more. Did you love your first husband?

DORA: Yes. I loved him dearly.

MYERS: (*Nervously*) You loved him, and yet you wouldn't care to have him back, would you?

DORA: What do you mean? What right have you to ask such a strange question?

MYERS: I beg your pardon. I know I have no right, but I had a fancy to know. You beautiful women are such a puzzling study, Mrs. Lester. You think of your first husband so much until you imagine you see him, and yet if by some wondrous power, he could be restored to you alive—I mean his old self—would you be willing to relinquish all your brilliant future and live with him again as a poor man's wife?

DORA: No. I should not. We never care to repeat our past lives. I loved my husband, but I wasn't happy there. I could never be happy as a poor man's wife.

MYERS: Precisely what I thought! You are a true woman, and a candid one. It is a pity you are so imaginative, but it will pass off when you are enjoying yourself among the gay counts of Paris. You must know that Paris is the city of enjoyment?

DORA: I dare say it is, but we shan't be gone for long.

MYERS: I am very glad to hear that, and, you know, I am engaged by Mr. Lester as a tutor to his crippled boy, Harry, and, by the way, you don't think of taking your little boy with you?

DORA: I don't know.

MYERS: Leave him with me. I give you my word of honor I will take great care of him.

DORA: I should not be afraid to trust you, Mr. Myers. You have done me a kindness in buying that old house off my hands, and somehow I feel as if you were an old friend. I felt so the first time I met you. Are you a single man, Mr. Myers?

MYERS: (*Mournfully*) Wife or children I have none.

DORA: Then I will leave Burtie with you until we return. We start for Paris immediately—but be kind to my boy, for he is the only one I care to live for. So now, good-bye. (*Shakes hands with Myers.*)
[Exit DORA, L. U. E.]

MYERS: (*Looking after DORA*) Good-bye, and bon voyage! And thank God you gave me one comfort in leaving my little boy. (*Enter NAPLEY at back, R. U. E., stops and listens*) Go to Paris, my dear Dora—

NAPLEY: To Paris!

[Exit R. U. E.]

MYERS:—And enjoy yourself. Be happy while you may, for I am afraid you'll soon tire of your gay life and wish yet you were a poor man's wife.
[Exit R. U. E.]

SCENE II.

[*Street at first E. Enter NAPLEY with hat on, overcoat on his arm, L. 1 E.*]

NAPLEY: It was lucky for me that I called today, or I would not have learned they were going to Paris. And to know that her first husband, Ray Standley, is alive and right here in her future home! Ha! ha! ha! I have another weapon (*looking off R. 1 E.*) to strike you with, my dear, Dora. And you have gone to Paris! It could not have suited me better. I shall meet you

there, my beautiful imp of Satan, and together we will enjoy old Lester's money. You shall obey me to the very letter. [*Exit R. 1 E.*]

[*Enter MYERS, L. 1 E., talking while entering, turns around, looks off L. 1 E.*]

MYERS: There's Miss Lester. What a sweet soul she is! Her face is like her heart—fair and spotless as a lily, and I am beginning to love her with a love that frightens me. What right have I to think of her or to speak her name even? Am I so lost to all honor and manhood that I would darken and desecrate her bright soul by the shadow of my wretched life! (*Pause*) Yet day by day the witchery of her loveliness grows stronger, yes, every day I remain. Ah, here she comes! [*Enter AGNES, L. 1 E.*]

AGNES: It seems so quiet now, they have gone away; don't you think so, Mr. Myers?

MYERS: I must say there is quite a change here, Miss Lester. By the way—would it be agreeable for me to fetch Mrs. Lester's little boy from the boarding school to night, or shall I wait?

AGNES: Oh, No, Mr. Myers, bring him down tonight, by all means. He will make this his home hereafter. He is such a dear little fellow, I shall be glad to have him. [*Enter HARRY LESTER on crutches, full dressed, L. 1 E.*]

HARRY: Do I intrude? If I do I'll take myself off.

AGNES: Intrude, my dear brother? Don't you know your presence always cheers me?

HARRY: Then I'll stay, as everything is so quiet now, they are gone. By the way, Mr. Myers, how do you like my new step-mother?

MYERS: I think she is very handsome.

HARRY: To be sure—so is a sleek panther. Poor papa! What a mistake he has made!

AGNES: Hush, Harry. What if Mrs. Lester heard you! She would not be pleased, I am sure. Am I not right, Mr. Myers? You must guard your words or some one else might hear you.

HARRY: Let them hear, then, with all my heart, I don't care.

AGNES: Oh, Harry! She may be ever so agreeable; she appears to be, I am sure, and she is so beautiful.

HARRY: Beauty is only skin deep, and under her skin, she carries the devil's own spirit. Poor papa! You just wait and see—she'll break his heart and lay him in his grave before a year is over, the wicked, evil-eyed devil.

AGNES: Don't judge her so harshly, please, Harry dear. Let's hope for the best. Papa may be happier now he is married again. Anyway she will never interfere with us, Mr. Myers, and you and I will have our happy little world all to ourselves.

HARRY: Let's change the subject. What are you two people beating about the bush for? "Mr. Myers," "Miss Lester," and so forth; why not call each other plain Albert and Agnes—give vent to your feelings; there is no one around to spy on your moonlight walks.

AGNES: Harry! Harry! What do you mean?

HARRY: (*Laughing*) Agnes, you little puss! Do you think I am blind? Why, anyone with half an eye can see you love each other. I have known it for a long time.

AGNES: Harry, you wicked boy! (*Kisses Harry.*)

HARRY: Mr. Myers, why don't you take Agnes for a long walk? She is sure to get sick staying indoors so much.

MYERS: It is always a pleasure for me to be of service to Miss Lester. [*Exit arm in arm, MYERS and AGNES, R. 1 E.*]

HARRY: There you go again: "Miss Lester," "Miss Lester"! Why not say Agnes—Agnes, dear? [*Exit R. 1 E.*]

SCENE III.

[*Parlor. Six months elapse between SCENE II and III. Parlor elegant; chairs, R., lounge L., table C., invitation cards on table, DORA seated at table reading cards, MRS. VICOR on lounge sewing.*]

MRS. V.: What shall we do tonight, Dora?

DORA: I don't know. I believe I am getting home-sick. I don't like Paris.

MRS. V.: Oh, hush! I could live here forever. Paris is the Paradise of the world. Don't be ungrateful for your good fortune, Dora. You are the luckiest woman alive.

DORA: We pay for all we get. If one could have all this wealth and beauty and be free, life would be worth living, but to be tethered to that old ogre! Bah! It's beauty and the beast over again! I am getting to loathe the very sight of him.

MRS. V.: My dear Dora! How foolish you talk. Mr. Lester is a pleasant, dignified gentleman, I am sure, and you have every freedom you desire. I say again: Don't be ungrateful. Would you like to be Dora Standley again in that dismal old house by the river Severn?

DORA: Oh, heavens, No! Never that! I wouldn't be poor again for the sake of any man that ever lived, but husbands are such a bore; one gets so tired of them!

MRS. V.: That's quiet true. But any sensible woman can school herself to endure a husband she does not love if she has every other comfort in life.

DORA: (*Reading cards*) Here is an invitation from Lord Spencer for the Ambassadors' dinner. I shan't go. I have a dozen here and how can one decide between so many? And old Lester wants me to hang on his arm like a dutiful wife here in Paris, too! (*Picks up card*) From Harry Napier, as I live! Poor, dear Harry. He wants me to go to a mask ball tonight. I'll go! I always was fond of Harry! I'd have married him if he'd had old Lester's money. [*Enter KITTY with wreath of flowers, gives to DORA, L. U. E.*] Oh! Kitty! How beautiful! Where on earth did they come from?

KITTY: A page brought them.

DORA: No name, no message? (*puts flowers on table*).

KITTY: He left this note. (*Gives note to DORA. Exit L. U. E.*)

DORA: (*Reads note.*) "Mrs. Lester, come to the Opera ball tonight, and wear a white mask, crowned with the flowers," (*aloud*) I am going to the Opera ball tonight.

[*Enter LESTER, full dress for riding, L. U. E.*]

LESTER: (*To DORA*) My dear, I came to see if you wouldn't like a drive this evening. It is so fine and we don't go to the ambassadors' until very late.

DORA: I am going to drive with an old friend of mine, Harry Napier (*turning to MRS. V.*) You know him, Mama. He is only here for a few days and we must treat him civilly. (*To LESTER*) You can take Mama. (*To MRS. V.*) You'd not object to a drive, would you, Mama?

MRS. V.: Dear me, no! I should like it above all things.

DORA: (*Putting her hands on LESTER's shoulders coaxing*) And I don't want to go to the ambassadors' dinner. I hate those stupid affairs; besides, I want to go to the Opera ball.

LESTER: The Opera ball! My dear Dora, you must not go.

DORA: Why not, pray?

LESTER: Because it is not a fitting place for you to go. No genteel ladies go to Opera balls, Dora,

DORA: Oh, I know better. Lady Sefton, and Madam La Cer and a host of others are going.

LESTER: No matter if the empress herself goes, you cannot! (*DORA moves back from him*) I don't choose that my wife shall go to such places. I am opposed to all sorts of mask parties.

DORA: I am not a child, to be ordered to go or to stay, according to your caprice, Mr. Lester. I am able to take care of myself, and I choose to go.

LESTER: Haven't I done my best to make you happy, my darling? This is the first time I ever thwarted a wish of yours. Surely you can afford to give up this one little thing in obedience to my wishes. I know the kind of people that make up those Opera balls, and I don't want you to go.

DORA: Well, I won't go, then. Will that content you? You old stupid. (*Puts arm around his neck, kisses him and moves back.*)

LESTER: Yes. I am content. I am very much obliged to you, my love. Ask anything else of me and you shall have your way.

DORA: Well, all I want tonight is to be left alone. I have such a dreadful headache; I shall go to my room.

LESTER: Your wish shall be law. I'll see that you shall not be disturbed tonight. (*To Mrs. V.*) Come. [*Both exit, L. U. E.*]

DORA: Oh, heavens! What a price I have to pay! When one serves a master one does not love, one is forced to practice deceit.

[*Enter CAPTAIN NAPIER, R. 2 E.*]

NAPIER: Ah, Dora! All alone?

DORA: You are just in time, Harry. I have had a few words with old Bluebeard; he has denied me my wish.

NAPIER: What is there in Paris, or even in the world that Mrs. Lester has not?

DORA: I wanted to go to the Opera ball tonight, and Bluebeard swears I shan't go.

NAPIER: You won't go of course?

DORA: Won't I, Mr. Napier! You'll see. I'd like to have you for my escort, but old Lester might find it out and come down on us like a wolf on the fold. If you are one bit afraid just say so.

NAPIER: Have I ever shown the white feather since I entered the ranks of your admirers?

DORA: Never; and I prefer you to all the rest. I'll tell you how I'll manage it. You meet me outside in two minutes. I will wear a white mask.

NAPIER: I shall be waiting. [*Exit L. 2 E.*]

DORA: (*Calls KITTY, L. U. E., or rings bell. Enter KITTY*) Kitty if anybody calls for me just tell them I have gone to my room. I have a dreadful headache and must not be disturbed. Gather up all those invitation cards and put them away. [*Exit L. 1 E.*]

KITTY: Yes, my lady. Oh! isn't it grand to be rich! (*pauses to look at cards.*) But I don't know; if we haven't as much money as the rich folks, we can be happy just the same. I know I would be if that Bill Stuben would hurry up and ask me to be his wife, but I guess he won't until we go back to dear old England. (*sighing*) Oh, me! Oh, my! If I don't get married soon, I won't be able to raise a house of children. [*Exit, L. U. E., curtain.*]

SCENE IV.

[*A street in Paris at First E. Enter DORA and NAPIER, DORA with opera cloak, white mask on face, NAPIER with black mask. Enter L. 1 E.*]

DORA: What a sinner I am, Harry! And poor old Lester thinks I am safe and snug in bed this minute, and is breaking his silly heart over my headache. You must think me atrociously wicked, now, don't you?

NAPIER: I think you dangerously bewitching.

DORA: (*Pointing off R. 1 E.*) Look! Look! The ball-room doors are open! Oh, I never dreamed of anything like this. I wouldn't have missed it for a kingdom! And Lester forbids my coming! The old fool. I'll never forgive (*waltz music heard*) him.

NAPIER: They are starting up a waltz! Let's join them!

[*Exit DORA and NAPIER, R. 1 E.*]

[*Enter WILL, overcoat and hat on, L. 1 E.*]

WILL: Well, well! Here's a go. I'll be blown for a cockney! I am a jack-of-all-trades! First I am a butler, next I am a coachman, and now I am to be guardian angel to Mrs. Lester. She thought of slipping off without the old man knowing anything about it, but he was too wise and smart for her. He saw her go, then he calls me and says: "William, follow your mistress at once and see that no harm comes to her. Keep her in sight until she returns home. Don't let her see you, but keep her from danger." Ah, the only danger that I know of is that the old man fears that some young fellow will run off with his young wife. Say, I wouldn't give my Kitty for half a dozen of her kind; but while Mrs. Lester is at the ball I'll see if I can't find a public house, where I can get a glass of ale. There's nothing like a glass of good old English ale. Did you ever try any? Um, um, boy! It will soon make you forget your troubles. Well, here goes to find some. [Exit R. 1 E.]

SCENE V.

[*Shrubby and trees and landscape at back. Enter DORA, without mask, from R. U. E., comes down front*]

DORA: (*Excited*) Oh! I am so sorry I came! They are a very unruly crowd, and since I entered the ball room I have been insulted twice by one who looks to me like the prince of darkness himself!

[*Enter NAPLEY, R. U. E., dressed in red tights, red cape over shoulder, red face and mask.*]

NAPLEY: Mrs. Lester!

DORA: (*Frightened*) Who are you?

NAPLEY: Ha! ha! ha! Don't you know me, Mrs. Lester? You are heartless to forget your friend so soon. I am your guiding spirit. Come to the dance.

DORA: Go away, you horrid creature! I would as soon dance with Satan himself. I must find Mr. Napier.

NAPLEY: You must come with me, do you hear? I am your master! Ha! ha! ha! You cannot resist me. Every human soul has either a good or evil angel, and I am yours, Mrs. Lester. Come!

DORA: What do you want with me? Why did you entice me here?

NAPLEY: I tempted and you came. You cannot resist me. I told you I was your master. Is your husband here?

DORA: No. I came with Mr. Napier. Let me go. (*Moves up stage.*)

NAPLEY: (*Grips DORA's arm and pulls her down to middle of stage.*) Ha! ha! ha! You tremble like a dove in the talons of a hawk; you are not frightened, Mrs. Lester? You wouldn't mind striking anyone a blow with this pretty, poisoned little toy! (*Shows dagger.*) Your husband, for instance, if he happened to be particularly in your way. Ha! ha! ha! You murderess! (*Throws her from him, DORA cowers to one knee with hands up*)

[Enter NAPIER., R. U. E., no mask, clutches NAPLEY by the collar, swings him around to back of stage.)

NAPIER: Stand back, you villain! Who are you that you presume to offer your services unasked?

NAPLEY: You'll find out who I am and all about my presumption in good time. [Exit R. U. E.]

DORA: Oh! Take me home, Harry, take me home! Don't let me see that terrible creature again! (*Rises to her feet.*)

NAPIER: What business had you dancing with such an imp of Satan? Why didn't you stay with me? I bring you here at the risk of being shot tomorrow by your husband, and you give me one dance as a reward! I shan't forget it! Who is that red devil?

DORA: Don't ask me! Oh, forgive me, Harry, and let's go home!

NAPIER: Then if you won't tell me, I'll make it my business to unmask that red devil. Remain here. [Exit R. U. E.]

DORA: I do hope there will be no blood-shed.
[Enter LESTER from L. 2 E., full dress, with overcoat and hat on.]

LESTER: So, Dora, you disobeyed me after all?

DORA: Oh! Forgive me! (*Weeps*) I will never deceive you again. I wanted to go so badly. I was so curious to see what it was like, and I found it was horrid. The crowd crushed me, I got sick and fainted. Oh, Mr. Lester, say you will forgive me!

LESTER: Yes, I forgive you. You are young and thoughtless. But, Oh! My wife! I would rather have spent my whole fortune on you than that you should have deceived me. I shall never trust you again as I did.

[DORA puts arms around his neck.]

DORA: Yes you shall. We will leave this wicked, tempting Paris, and go home to England and I'll be the truest and most faithful wife that ever lived. We will go tomorrow. I am quite sick of this life; promise me that we will.

LESTER: Yes, we will go at once.

DORA: (*Aside*) Thank heaven! That danger is over!

LESTER: Come.

[*Exit L. 2 E. LESTER and DORA*]

[*Enter NAPLEY, masked, followed by NAPIER, not masked, both have pistols.*]

NAPIER: Now, Sir, who are you?

NAPLEY: Ha! ha! ha; What a question for an Opera ball. Mr. Napier, do as I do—find out.

NAPIER: I will! (*Pulls mask off face*).

NAPLEY: An insult like this, Mr. Napier, calls for but one answer. Appoint your own time and choose your own weapons.

NAPIER: Let the weapons be pistols. I suppose you have one on your person?

NAPLEY: I have.

NAPIER: And the time and place—right here and now. We don't need any witnesses.

NAPLEY: I agree; and so that we shall not take any advantage of each other we will stand back to back, right here. (*Center of stage.*) You say the word, "Go," then each of us takes four steps in opposite directions, turn and fire!

NAPIER: Enough! (*They stand back to back, pistols in hand*) "Go." (*NAPIER to take four steps; NAPLEY takes one step, turns and fires at NAPIER. NAPIER drops pistol, turns, points hand at NAPLEY.*) Coward! (*Falls dead, middle of stage.*)

NAPLEY: Ha! ha! ha! One of my rivals out of my way! My guardian angels know when I have work to perform, for they always help me, and no one is the wiser! [*Enter WILL from R. U. E.*]

WILL: Liar! -

NAPLEY: Curse you! (*NAPLEY turns and shoots; WILL falls as if dead.*) Now to escape back to England and get some of old Lester's money for Dora's secret; then I'll leave Europe forever!

[*Quick Curtain.*]

The Diamond Necklace

ACT IV., SCENE I.

[*Parlor table and chairs at L., lounge at R., LESTER seated at table, DORA seated in rocking chair, reading; potted ferns and flowers at back and sides; high lamp with shade, on table. Enter AGNES, L. 2 E., with basket of keys.*]

AGNES: (*To DORA*) Here are the keys, Mrs. Lester, and as soon as you are at leisure, Mrs. Mason, the housekeeper, will receive your orders and show you over the house.

DORA: (*Looking at LESTER*) The keys! What on earth do I want with the keys? What does she mean, Mr. Lester?

LESTER: She is abdicating her throne in favor of her new mother, my love. She has ruled the household for years and there never was a wiser head on such young shoulders. The very queen of housekeepers, is my little Agnes, and she is willing to resign her post to you.

DORA: I don't want it! I don't know one thing about house-keeping. I wouldn't undertake such an awful business for the world. My dear Agnes, keep your key basket, and rule and reign as you have heretofore done. I shall never interfere with you!

LESTER: (*To AGNES*) Your mother is so young and so inexperienced, Agnes; will it be asking too much of you to be mistress of your father's house a little longer?

AGNES: Why, no papa, if it pleases you; but as we are to have so much company, I must leave a good deal to Mrs. Mason. I must not neglect Harry, you know.

LESTER: Certainly not, dear; but you can continue to issue orders until your mother gets accustomed to her new position.

AGNES: I am willing, papa, and I'll do my best to make her happy.
[*Exit L. 2 E.*]

LESTER: She is such a good girl, Dora—so gentle and obliging—you'll be sure to like her; and there's Harry, poor fellow; he has been a cripple from his birth and he is a little sensitive. I wish you'd try and make friends with him, my dear. Now I feel already by your little son as if I were his father. I shall deal with him as I do with my own children. You, Dora, are the idol of my heart. I love you as I never loved before. My fortune is at your command. You shall have everything you desire. In return, I only ask you to be loyal and kind to my children. I am not asking too much, am I

DORA: Too much, you silly old soul? No; haven't I promised to be a true and a loving wife? I'll be a good mother, only upon my word, I can't consent to housekeeping. (*Throws book away; jumps up, puts arms around LESTER's neck; kisses him; LESTER straining DORA to him*)

LESTER: My darling, my own beautiful darling! Oh, Dora! I was beginning to fear I had made a mistake, but you do care for me a little?

DORA: I do care for you a great deal. I would rather be your wife than that of any other man living. Never doubt me again. (*Moves back a step from LESTER*)

LESTER: No, my dear! I will never doubt you again. Now what do you think happened today? Would you believe it? I've had a proposal for my daughter's hand?

DORA: That is not surprising. Agnes is a beautiful girl, and you are wealthy enough to give her a splendid dowry.

LESTER: True enough; but I was taken by surprise all the same. I had no dream that Lord Bresford had any notion of Agnes.

DORA: And what did Agnes say?

LESTER: Oh, she said "no" of course. She doesn't care a pin for any of them. She heaps it all upon Harry. She could never go away from him, but I am certain she's got some trouble at heart and, between you and me, I am afraid the little girl is growing too fond of that fellow Myers.

DORA: Why, he has never proposed for her has he?

LESTER: No, he never hinted at such a thing. He is a handsome, winning sort of a fellow, and Agnes is young, and they have been thrown so much together, but I'll have to put a stop to it somehow this very day. Maybe if Myers was out of the way there might be some chance for Lord Bresford? I would like to see her settled well before I die.

DORA: Don't talk of dying!

LESTER: Would it grieve you to lose me? (*Kisses DORA*) I have arranged all my affairs so that everything will go straight, no matter when I am called away. Harry, poor boy, he will come in as my heir. The Lester property has descended intact from father to son. Harry will succeed me, but Dora, I have provided handsomely for you and your little boy. In case of Harry's death, the landed property will all go to you and your son. Agnes has her portion settled on her. I've got it down in black and white. (*DORA leans her head on his shoulder*) I have frightened my poor darling! Forgive me! But it is such a pleasure, dear, to know you'd grieve to lose me. There, there! Jump up and get back your roses. I'll go and find this Myers. (*Kisses her.*) God bless you, my darling. The stables are at your command, and so is my bank book, and I give you *carte blanche* for any and everything. [*Kisses DORA and Exit R. 2 E.*]

DORA: (*Spitting and wiping her mouth*) Bah! (*Wipes mouth*) The price is a fearful one. It makes me sick. I'd as soon be forced to kiss a monkey! Bah! I am to be a loyal wife and a good mother and a pattern housekeeper and have my domestic virtues carved upon my tombstone! Ha! ha! ha! It's too rich! If ever a human soul was given over to the temptation of the devil, mine is. How can I resist? How can I, when the way is made plain for me? Only think! If that crippled boy of his was only in his grave, where he ought to be, my little Burtie might come in for all of Lester's wealth. Ah, well, I have sold my soul for a price, and it will go hard if I lose in the end! [*DORA retires and listens at L. U. E. Enter LESTER and MYERS, R. U. E.*]

LESTER: It is a very delicate matter, of which I am going to speak, Mr. Myers. It pains me to do so to such an extent that I should certainly keep silent, but for a keen sense of duty to my children, for it is of my daughter, Agnes, I am about to speak.

(*Pause*) In the past few hours I have had very flattering and desirable proposals for my daughter's hand in marriage, but she refuses to listen to any of them. Something seems to trouble the girl and I have feared (*pauses*) —upon my soul, Sir, I don't know how to get at the point in question. You are a man of honor, I take it, Mr. Myers; you'll understand what I am trying to convey. Well, I have been led to think that my Agnes is becoming too much attached to her brother's friend and tutor than is good for her own peace of mind. It is a hard thing to think my daughter in love with her brother's paid tutor. Now what have you to say in this matter. (MYERS, *silent, covers his face with his hands*) What am I to think? Have you taken undue advantage of my daughter's youth and innocence?

MYERS: Never, Mr. Lester! Never, on my soul.

LESTER: I am glad of that. Girls are usually silly creatures at Agnes' age, and she'll outgrow this foolish fancy when you are out of sight. I hate to see you go on my poor boy's account; he is so fond of you, but under the circumstances, Mr. Myers, if you are the man I take you to be, you will not want to wait for me to ask you to leave the neighborhood.

MYERS: No, sir. I'll go at once. I ought to have gone months ago. Don't think worse of me than I deserve, Mr. Lester. I am not a villain at heart.

LESTER: I do not see what else can be done. I don't know that you care for my daughter, Mr. Myers, and even if you did—

MYERS: (*With outstretched hand*) For heaven's sake, spare me, Sir! (DORA *listens eagerly*) I do care for her. I would die for her cheerfully this hour to spare her innocent heart one moment's pain, but I have no right to say, even this much. My life is under a curse, which forever makes me an alien and an outcast on the face of the earth!

LESTER: Then why did you worm yourself into my family, and into my children's affection?

MYERS: Forgive me, Sir, (*mournfully*) I had no thought of anything like this; heaven knows, I have done no wrong—

LESTER: That may be, but a man whose life is under a curse, as you say, has no right to force his way into happy home circles, where there are no hidden skeletons. However, the injury may be easily remedied when you are once out of the way.

MYERS: I will go at once.

LESTER: Thank you, Sir; and if I have been rough, forgive me. An only daughter's happiness is very dear to a father. In conclusion, do me the favor to call at my bankers' and I'll remunerate you for whatever losses this sudden departure may involve you.

MYERS: (*With pride*) Don't insult me, Sir. I am not so fallen as to be paid for doing an honorable act. I shall go and get my things and leave at once. [Exit R. 1 E.]

LESTER: I do believe he is a gentleman, every inch, but he is too poor to marry my daughter. However, I'll go down to the stables and order the carriage and give him a cheering word at parting. [Exit R. U. E.]

DORA: (*At back of stage, L. U. E.*) They shan't send him away. I'll teach him to forget her. If he goes I shan't have a friend left. If my crime is ever found out, I believe he would help me.

MYERS: (*Enter MYERS, overcoat and hat on, carrying satchel, R. 1 E.*) Oh, God! What is there left for me to live for now? Nothing. Since I committed that one crime to satisfy the greed of the woman who bore my name, my life has been a curse. The cup of happiness is dashed from me before I have even tasted it, and I am driven forth like a ship without a rudder or compass, on the dark waters, to be dashed upon the rocks of hopeless despair! (*DORA comes down stage from L. U. E.*)

DORA: Mr. Myers, don't go. I want you to stay.

MYERS: What do you mean?

DORA: I want you to stay. It is cruel to send you away because of a silly girl's fancy. Let her go, and you stay for my sake.

MYERS: (*Starts back a step*) For your sake? And you a wife, the wife of a trusting husband? What do you take me for?

For shame! For shame! I never thought you could fall so low as this! Oh, heavens! My punishment is just. I might have averted all this trouble and shame. [Exit L. U. E.]

DORA: (*Looking after MYERS*) He's gone. Now I have not a friend left, and I'll have to fight my own battles alone. But for that one dread, my life would be perfect. Napley! He may never come to accuse me. If he does, gold will buy his silence. (*Looking off R. & L.*) Ah, if they were all out of the way, all this princely wealth would be mine and my boy's and I could do as I wished. It must be mine! I will not lose it! One puny crippled boy between me and the goal of my ambition! Ha! ha! ha! (*fiercely*) I'll sweep them all off! There's only one way lies before me, and I must walk therein, no matter what the cost may be.

[Enter COUNT NAPLEY, R. U. E.]

DORA: Count Napley! You here?

NAPLEY: (*Sneeringly*) My dear Mrs. Lester! You look resplendent. I trust you are glad to see me? I come in your hour of need, as an obliging angel. You should confess that you have need of me.

DORA: I must go and find my husband.

NAPLEY: One moment. We may not get another chance for private speech, Mrs. Lester. I am growing impatient. I don't intend to wait. You must put old Lester out of the way.

DORA: There are others in the way besides old Lester.

NAPLEY: They must go, too. We must have the way clear. I'll provide the means and you shall use them. You won't have any scruples, of course. I would not trust any other woman. I have proof of your ability, you know.

DORA: Hush! (*Looking around*) Remember your promise, the past must rest.

NAPLEY: So be it, as long as you keep to the letter of my law. We must hurry up and get rid of them. In the meantime, I am out of money, and I want five thousand at once.

DORA: You shall have it, only keep my secret.

NAPLEY: All right, and don't spoil your beauty by frowning, my love! Only think how long I have held my tongue. Any other man having witnessed what I did, would have blurted out the whole story long ago; and that lovely throat of yours, instead of being encircled with diamonds, would have had a rope.

DORA: Oh, heavens! Will you hush?

NAPLEY: I will. I beg your pardon; but I must have that five thousand—not a cent less, and here is a present for you. I brought it all the way from Vienna. (*Gives small vial to DORA*) One tiny drop will do the work; it will cause death instantly. Don't forget, now; get me the money. [*Exit DORA, L. U. E. and re-enter with purse of money*]

DORA: Here is one thousand. I'll get the other for you some other time.

NAPLEY: It isn't enough. I must have the five thousand.

DORA: I tell you this is all I have at present. Can't you wait a day or two?

[*Enter LESTER, R. U. E., stops and listens concealed at back*]

NAPLEY: Not a minute longer than it suits my pleasure.

DORA: What if I refuse to get the money at all?

NAPLEY: Shall I tell you my beauty? Before another sunset the world shall hear the secret I have kept so long, that's all.

DORA: I'll get it as soon as I can. Don't bully and threaten me, Count Napley.

NAPLEY: I have no such intention. You asked a plain question and I gave you a straight answer. I want four thousand more, I leave here at 7; don't disappoint me.

DORA: I won't; never fear.

NAPLEY: I don't fear, madam! If there is any fear, it is on your side! The sword hangs over your head, not mine, and unless you do my bidding, I'll sever the string and let the sword fall. Bear in mind how long and faithfully I've kept your secret. What's to be done must be done before I come again, do you understand me? Start this evening; get one of them out of the

way—one tiny drop—any doctor will say it was heart disease, and you'll be safe. Now get the rest of the money right away.

DORA: I will without fail. [Exit, L. U. E.]

LESTER: (*At back of stage.*) Oh! If I could have died! Oh, if I could have died in ignorance of this!

NAPLEY: Ha! ha! ha! She dare not disappoint me! Oh, no! I have too firm a hold on her.

LESTER: (*Comes down stage, whip in hand*) You scoundrel! How dare you insult my wife? What secret of my wife's do you possess?

NAPLEY: Sorry to disoblige you, Mr. Lester, but I couldn't think of betraying a lady's confidence. As a man of honor, you surely wouldn't ask me.

LESTER: You met my wife and demanded money of her, by what right? I am here to find out and I will. (*Takes hold of NAPLEY by coat collar, shakes him*). What is the secret? Out with it, or I'll not leave life in your miserable body!

NAPLEY: Tell you and lose my hush money for the secret? What do you take me for?

LESTER: A scoundrel and a low sneak! (*Lester whips him, swings him round the stage*). Now, you villain! What do you say for yourself? Will you tell me the secret? (*Lets him loose*).

NAPLEY: Yes! Oh, Yes! I'll tell you, Mr. Lester, and in a way you won't fancy. Your wife sent you here to horsewhip me that she might save her hush money. (*LESTER moves forward.*) Don't strike me again. But I will make you weep tears of blood, for every blow you've given me! Ha! ha! ha! I'll have my revenge, and revenge is sweeter than gold. You shall hear—hear the secret before the sunset. Revenge! Revenge! Ha! ha! ha! [Exit R. U. E.] Ha! ha! ha!

LESTER: My wife's secret! What secret can Dora have? Poor girl I haven't the least doubt but that this scoundrel has betrayed her into some sort of trouble. I can't believe she is false, and I won't believe it until the truth is forced upon me. [Exit R. 2 E.]

[Enter DORA, L. U. E., has purse and small bottle.]

DORA: What am I to do? I can't think of parting with all this money, but there is no help for it. I dare not fail that wretch. Oh, heavens! To be badgered and tortured in this way! To live under a curse and never draw a free breath! One had better be dead. Only I could not die. But why should I think of it when all this wealth will be mine shortly, if I only succeed. [*Enter KITTY L. 2 E., with tray, cup and saucer, sets tray on table.*] What have you there, Kitty?

KITTY: Some food for Master Harry, but I forgot the cake.

DORA: Go get the cake, then; take it in all together. [*Exit KITTY, L. 2 E.*] Now is my only chance; one tiny drop in his coffee and no one will be the wiser. (*Takes small vial from her dress, goes to table, pours poison in coffee, moves back.*) It's done! [*Enter KITTY, L. 2 E., with plate and cake, takes up tray*] Kitty, tell Master Harry that his father desires him to eat. Poor boy, I know he has been feeling sick this last day or two, and get him to drink his coffee while it is warm.

KITTY: Yes, my lady.

[*Exit KITTY, R. U. E.*]

DORA: I wonder where Count Napley went to; he was to have been here to receive this money. I can afford to buy his silence. It won't be long now, before I am mistress of Lester Court, mistress in my own right, with no living soul to come between me and my possessions. I have worked hard and my success is sure. One more move and the game is mine! (*Murmuring heard off L., DORA listens.*) Hark! What is that commotion down stairs! What does it mean? I hear strange men's voices. (*Screaming heard from KITTY at R. U. E.*) What! What is that?

[*Enter KITTY from R. U. E., running and screaming*]

KITTY: Oh! My lady! Oh! My lady! He is dead! He is dead!

DORA: Who is dead? Speak out, you fool!

KITTY: Master Burtie!

[*DORA takes KITTY by the shoulders and shakes her.*]

DORA: Tell me what you mean, or I'll tear your heart out!

KITTY: I couldn't help it! He was in Master Harry's room as merry as could be and he went to the tray and drank some of

Master Harry's coffee and in a minute he fell down dead! And there he lies now! Oh, dear! Oh, dear!

DORA: My darling! My own little boy, whom I loved better than my own life! (*Weeps*).

[*Enter HARRY on crutches from R. U. E.*]

HARRY: (*To DORA, and pointing R. U. E.*) Mrs. Lester! Behold your work! I didn't want my food, but poor Burtie drank some of the coffee, and there he lies. Your evil deeds have recoiled upon your own head! You have poisoned your own child!

DORA: (*Weeping and waving her arms, walking to and fro*) Oh, my darling! My baby boy! My beautiful boy! (*Enter Mrs. V., with shawl and bonnet on her arm.*) My little Burtie! He is dead! He is dead!

MRS. V.: (*To DORA, excited*) No matter. It would be better if you were dead, also! Come, the house is full of officers! They are here to arrest you for the murder of Ray Standley! Do you hear? They are here to arrest you for the murder of Ray, your first husband! Did you do it? Are you guilty?

DORA: Yes! (*Eyes staring wild*) I did it!

MRS. V.: Then fly while there is yet time. Take this shawl and bonnet. A train leaves for the north. If you get there in time you may yet escape! Take the short-cut through the oak woods! Go! Run! (*Gives shawl and bonnet to DORA*)

DORA: Oh, Mama! It has been all your fault! (*Runs off, L. U. E.*)

MRS. V.: Come here Kitty. Tell me, how did it happen?

KITTY: Why, Master Harry wanted me to get him some coffee and cake, but I forgot the cake, and I left the tray with the coffee on this table while I went back for the cake; then I took it into Harry's room, and just as soon as I set the tray down, Master Burtie ran to the small table and drank some of the coffee; then he turned around, with his little hands up to his throat, and cried out: "Mama! Mama!" then fell down dead!

MRS. V.: Oh, what a calamity! What a calamity! Come, show me little Burtie! Oh, my! Oh, my! [*Exit Mrs. V., KITTY and HARRY, R. U. E.*]

SCENE II.

[*Country landscape at first E. Enter DORA, running, face very pale.*]

DORA: Oh! I cannot escape. I feel I am too weak to go much further, but if I can reach the oak woods I may be able to conceal myself for a time until the road is clear for me to go on; but I fear I shall never make it! Oh heaven, help me! (*Runs off, R. 1 E.*)

OFFICER: (*Enter OFFICER, L. U. E., looks off R. 1 E.*) Well, for the land's sake? I wonder what is the matter with that poor woman? Something is surely wrong with her!

SECOND OFFICER: (*Enter L. 1 E.*) Seen anything of a strange woman around here? Dark and good-looking, wearing a dark dress?

FIRST OFFICER: That's her to a tee! Has she broken out of a hospital, poor thing. She looks kind o' pale!

SECOND OFFICER: She is a murderess! Which way did she go?

FIRST OFFICER: Right through the clover field and into the oakwood.

SECOND OFFICER: Come! We must find her! [*Exit R. 1 E.*]

SCENE III.

[*Woods and bushes, wood landscape at back*]

DORA: (*Enter DORA, slow and staggering, R. U. E., soft music*) I cannot go any farther. I am too faint! Oh! If I could die right here, now! Then I would know that the Lord would pardon me sometime. But there is no such blessing for me. If they catch me here they will take me back and hang me! But they must not catch me! I must escape! I must!

[*Enter FIRST and SECOND OFFICERS, R. U. E., take DORA by the arm.*]

SECOND OFFICER: Mrs. Lester, we arrest you in the name of the law!

DORA: Oh, let me go! Don't detain me! I am ill and in such a hurry to pursue my journey!

SECOND OFFICER: You must go back with us.

DORA: No! no! no! I won't go back! I have four thousand pounds with me! You shall have it all if you only suffer me to go on!

SECOND OFFICER: We don't want your money! You must go back with us!

[*Struggles and fights until out of hearing.*]

DORA: Let me go! Oh, let me go! I will not go back! (OFFICERS *drag her off*, R. U. E.) Let me go! Let me go!

SCENE IV.

[*Street scene at L. 1 E. Enter NAPLEY, overcoat and hat on*]

NAPLEY: I have done wrong in giving Dora into the hands of the law so quick! I ought to have seen to my own safety first and then have given her away! Well, old Lester knows the secret by this time! Ha! ha! ha! I believe this will be a lesson to him, never to use the whip on a gentleman again. I am proud to think how I got my revenge on him so quickly; but how in the world did he know of the reward for my capture for that little affair in France? I can't make it out! Anyway I must get out of England at once! *Enter WILL, stops at R. 1 E., covers NAPLEY with gun.*) Then I'll—

WILL: "Take four steps in opposite direction, turn and fire!"

NAPLEY: Curse you! I thought you dead!

WILL: Not just yet, Napley. I kept on your track and now I have you cornered, and here is your dear French officer coming! (*Enter POLICE OFFICER, L. 1 E.*)

OFFICER: Count Napley, a fine name that! Ha! ha! Gentleman Jim, you are my prisoner!

NAPLEY: On what charge, Mr. Officer?

OFFICER: Robbing the chateau la Mon of a diamond necklace; also the murder of Captain Napier in France! (*Puts handcuffs on NAPLEY.*) Come, we must catch the steamer for France!

NAPLEY: After all my scheming I have fallen down at last!

WILL: Bring him along, Captain! (*All Exit, R. 1 E., WILL singing, "We Won't Go Home 'Til Morning."*)

[*Enter LESTER and HARRY, overcoats and hats on. HARRY on crutches.*]

HARRY: I was just told they have taken Mrs. Lester to the County Jail.

LESTER: With all my wealth, I am the most wretched man alive! Heaven help me to bear my bitter lot! Harry, for the love of heaven keep silent of this last affair; don't utter one word to a living soul. She is accused of one crime, poor girl. In the midst of deserved wrath, let us be merciful. It was Count Napley who accused her. I knew he was a villain! Come, we'll go and see if we can get bail for her out of that dungeon, poor girl!

[*Exit both, R. 1 E.*]

SCENE V.

[*Prison: Door in back, prison cot, chair, table at side door in flat, dim light; DORA standing by chair, dressed in black; hair loose and down.*]

DORA: (*Weeping*) Alone, all alone, within this dark, cold, dreary cell! Shunned by all, as if the world did fear me and to die so young! It all comes of one wrong! That one great wrong I never can forget it, never; try as I may; it is forever before my eyes; sleeping or waking, the stain is on my soul; it hangs about my neck like a millstone and it has dragged me down at last with shame and sorrow to a murderer's grave! Oh, how happy I used to be in the days of my girlhood! How far back it seems, when I was an innocent girl and Ray loved me! Poor Ray! What a good husband he was! And I made his life miserable and murdered him! Murdered the father of my baby boy! Oh, heaven! Forgive me! And that wretch saw me do the deed! It was all for love of dress and wealth and show! Mama and Florence urged me on! Mama is more to blame than I am! She taught me to worship riches and such things from the cradle! If my poor Papa had lived, my life would have been different. He used to

teach me to pray—Mama never did! She used to say it was mockery! It's too late now to learn! God would not forgive a wretch like me! There is no hope for a murderer! There is not even a friendly voice to cheer my last moments on earth! Of all my friends they have all left me here alone! All alone! (*Sits in chair, puts hands to face, weeps.*) Oh, God!, have mercy on me!

[*Enter MYERS in door in flat, talking as entering.*]

MYERS: Dora! Oh, Dora!

DORA: (*Starts up from chair*) Oh, Mr. Myers! Have you come to help me?

MYERS: Yes, I have come to help you! I made up my mind to let you die! You deserve your fate! I thought to keep my secret forever, never to let the world know who and what I am, but my heart failed me. I loved you once and you are the mother of my child! Dora, don't you know me? (*Takes off beard and wig.*)

DORA: (*Staggers back with a scream*) Oh, Ray! Ray! Have you come back from the dead to accuse me?

RAY STANDLEY: Not to accuse you, but to save your wretched life! I am no ghost, but a living man! When you threw me into the river that night, I was not dead! My body drifted ashore and an outward-bound ship's crew picked me up. I was restored to life and reason, but I had no desire to return home! I wandered off to the ends of the earth, but love for my wife, although she tried to murder me, brought me back. I came as Mr. Myers, and bought the old river house that was once our happy home! (*Pause*) You remember the time when I asked you if Ray Standley could come back to you, his old self, would you be glad to see him? Your answer was: "No! I never could be happy as a poor man's wife!" Then I determined never to reveal myself, but leave this country forever. Hearing you was arrested for my murder, I came back and revealed myself to save your life.

[*DORA staggers back with hand over heart and head.*]

DORA: Ray! Ray! It is my Ray! Oh, thank heaven! I didn't murder you! (*Speaks very slowly*) I—I—I thought it was the peddler lying on the lounge, and I wanted the diamond necklace!

(*Pause*) I never intended to harm you, my love! (*Staggers and sways*) I have loved you always; but I—I fear you have come too late to help me! Oh! What is this feeling coming over me? (*Pause—Staggers around*) I cannot see you, Ray! I—I—I am dying! Ray! Say you forgive me! Forgive me! (*Falls into RAY'S arms, who lays her down, center of stage, head pillowed on his knee.*)

RAY STANDLEY: Dora! Dora! My wife! I do forgive, dear! Speak to me! Don't leave me! Speak! Oh, heavens! She is dead! (*Holds her head close to him. Lester heard without*)

LESTER: (*From without*) Dora! Dora! I have secured bail (*enters door in flat*) for you. Come!

RAY STANDLEY: Too late! Too late! Dora is dead!

LESTER: Dead! (*Runs to DORA'S side, takes hold of her hand*)
Oh. . . my . . . God . . .

[THE END]

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